

## **Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Essay Contest – 2006**

### **Second Prize: Karen Hendrickson, Sylvester Middle School**

It started with a dream that everyone is equal, many views and one vision that skin color doesn't matter.

Martin Luther King Jr. was an inspiration, he had the courage to stand up and say what he thought was right, even when most of the people who were in power thought it was wrong. From 1957 to 1968 King traveled over six million miles and spoke over twenty-five hundred times, going wherever there was injustice and doing all in his power to improve it.

Something King was famous for was his peaceful protests, which he modeled after Gandhi. Like the Bus Boycott that lasted 382 days, during those days King was thrown in jail and his house was bombed, but he never gave up and kept on fighting for what was right. In the end Negroes and white people were allowed to ride on the bus as equals, which shows just how much you can achieve if you never give up in what you believe. He wasn't just a leader of the Civil Right movement; he was the eye opener for the whole world.

Obviously he changed a lot, but his work was left unfinished. I can honestly say that it gives me a heavy heart to think about all that King did for the human race and the fact that he was just assassinated by some ignorant fool who thought he was wrong! He could have done so much for us, why couldn't more people have opened their eyes and realized that black people are real people, not things that just take up space?

King was arrested twenty times and assaulted at least four, that didn't stop him from getting five honorary degrees, earning the title of "Man of the year" from Time magazine, writing five books and lots of articles, and at age thirty-five, earning the Nobel Peace Prize. The 54,123 dollars he received from the prize went to the cause of the Civil Rights Movement.

One of Dr. King's most famous protests was in Washington D.C. when he gave his speech "I have a dream" in front of more that 250,000 people.

He had a dream that changed America for the better, but there is still derogatory terms used everyday like nigger or cracker. I hate it and I don't want people to say them, but I can't do anything to stop it, I try to speak up when someone says something that offends me, but what voice do I have when I'm just "a stupid white girl"? Most people feel that they cannot change anything all by themselves, but if you have a cause that people believe in and you fight for it till the end, you can change so much.

Some evidence of non-equal rights still existent in present day is in sports, there was a Native American basketball team called "The Whities" and their jerseys had three funny looking white kids on them. They didn't last that long until the government stepped in

and said they had to take the white kids off their jerseys, and yet we have a football teams called the Redskins. How does that work?! Why cant we just call each other white, black or Native Americans instead of some of the nasty words people came up with to degrade them back in the 1700s? That's right, in the 1700s people came up with mean nick names that we still use today for whatever reason. It doesn't make you look cool or tough it makes you look like an insensitive fool that needs to clean out your mouth.

What does all this have to do with Martin Luther King you might ask; well this is the sort of thing he was fighting against, he wanted everyone to treat each other like brothers and sisters, not like enemies because of race. When he was assassinated on April 4 1968 his work didn't really die, because black and white privileges are no longer limited because of the color of skin, but if he was still alive I think he might have been able to help my generation, which is pretty obviously racially divided. I think that the majority of black kids at my school look up to the rappers and other artists that talk about being a gangster or a player, but those guys aren't real and so they lead kids on to believe that you can really live like that. My teacher is like a Martin Luther King to me, because she is a smart, dark woman that has an opinion and isn't shy to share it. She gives my class ideas on how improve our generation by influencing those around us, which is what M.L.K. did, he did it by leading protests though.

Even though I never had the privilege of meeting Dr. King, I have the privilege of living in a time that was influenced by his brilliant ideas and courage. Without him I think black people would still be segregated and we would still be culturally insensitive.

#### Bibliography:

[http://nobelprize.org/cgibin/print? from=/nobel\\_prizes/peace/laureates/1964/king-bio.html](http://nobelprize.org/cgibin/print?from=/nobel_prizes/peace/laureates/1964/king-bio.html)

Martin Luther King Jr., Jean Darby, Minneapolis :Lerner Publications Co. published: 2005